

# LIVES AND VICISSITUDES OF OLD BOOKS.

WRITTEN FOR THE SUNDAY REPUBLIC.  
Of the making and selling and buying of books there is no end.

And yet, after books have been made and sold and bought a question may be asked, one that is not easy to answer.

It is: What becomes of these many books? Are they preserved in public and private libraries, at the book stores or in the warehouses of publishers?

The true story of the book trade would answer these questions in a way surprising to the public.

Old books, like old coins, may have a certain value if rightly placed, but can the same be said of the popular novel of yesterday or the day before that?

Who cares nowadays for "Robert Elsmere," except to know, as a matter of history, that the story once created a furor?

To mention Rider Haggard's "She" is to provoke a smile. In this year of 1903 readers are forgetting that there was such a book as "When Knighthood Was in Flower."

What becomes of these lost favorites, deposed sovereigns of a brief popularity?

The publisher auctions off his unsold-for copies in the big cities, and the dealer in secondhand books may or may not make a profitable investment.

The book dealer may store these books in his basement for a time and later have them carted away to a paper factory to make room for others which will know a like fate.

The manufacturers of paper might be able to add a chapter to the story of lost books, for he makes old books and papers into some form of paper, or paper mache, and this rejuvenated product begins another career. However, the story of books as books, not as waste paper, is interesting.

To know the life story of a book of history, or travel, or adventure would be worth while, for such a history might be more absorbing than that told in its pages.

The dealer in secondhand books is an important personage. He knows or should know the value of any book that comes to his hands.

He is often able to give a fair idea of the degree of attainment of his patrons, whether they buy books because they are cheap or because of a discriminating taste and with the purpose of a collector.

The road over which books travel to the shop of the secondhand dealer is not easy to describe, for it is devious in its course, but once in the hands of the knowing dealer it may enjoy a period of distinction.

SEARCHING THE CORNERS OF OLD BOOK STORES.

The book collector knows the shop of the dealer in secondhand books. Indeed, he may be said to haunt such shops, looking for the volumes which may be in his specialty.

Books that are out of print often come to have an entirely fictitious value on account of the demands of the man with a hobby in that particular line.

Collectors there are who want any book that is old enough to "have its s's printed like r's."

Others may want books on the history of the horse trade or cowpox, or something else out of the usual.

Where three men may be keen after handsome bindings, one may be interested in the contents of the book itself. The collector of old engravings must know the history of the book trade and the names of old printers.

Trade journals give a fair index of the demands of the discriminating book buyer. Last summer, a few weeks after the death of Whistler, the artist, it was recorded in a number of book shops that certain customers wanted copies of Whistler's "Gentle Art of Making Enemies."

Such a request might be entered along with a memorandum that another would be buyer longed for a book called "Fifty Years in Maryland," while others wanted old books on horticulture, live stock and kindred subjects.

Dealers who are unable to supply such books from their own stock advertise in trade journals, giving a list of the books

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No matter what his rank or position may be, the lover of books is the richest and the happiest of men.—Langford, "The Praise of Books."

wanted, and the chances are that the earnest seeker for truth in the shape of some old book or pamphlet will one day be rewarded. It would seem, then, that a kind of exchange is thus kept up.

COLLECTORS GO BACK TO OLD-BOOK MEN.

The collector of to-day is eager to add to his book shelves, and yet in a few years, or after his death, his collection may be scattered among heirs, given away, or

sold at auction, whereupon the book dealer again appears as the good angel of another generation of collectors, and the eager hunt continues.

Much-wanted books may be stored in closets or attics or basements of houses belonging to the unknowing and uncaring, much to the anxiety and distress of the dealer and collector.

In this connection it should be recorded that pamphlets and stray leaves may have a value, and they may not.

A certain book shop of New York advertised a few weeks ago for "any old book or pamphlet uncut." Another collector wanted any book written by any Sedgwick, while a collector of historical books wanted the "Narrative of the sufferings of Mary Harrison From Indian Barbarity," published at Pittsburgh in 1828.

By the side of an advertisement for "The Discourses on a Sober and Temperate Life," by Lewis Cornaro, a noble Venetian, printed in 1788 for Benjamin White at Horace's Head, London, was a request for books or papers on litigation, investigation or adjustment of life or accident insurance cases.

The library of Congress recently bought a copy of a book so recently printed as Conde B. Pallen's "New Rubaiyat," printed in St. Louis in 1902.

Another collector looked for any edition of the works of W. Gilmore Simms prior to 1850, and another asked for "Fifty Years on the Mississippi," while an interested person inquired for any book or pamphlet on Mormonism.

One book dealer recorded that a customer looked for "Cousin Sally Dillard" and "Pensioners of the Revolutionary War."

When the dealer in old and rare books, first editions, and secondhand books leaves his catalogues there is often a rush among collectors to order a longed-for book that may be so listed.

In such cases, where there is not a copy of the book, the first order received is filled, and the others must wait with hope deferred but keener than ever because of the tantalizing knowledge that the book was once in the hands of the dealer.

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DECEMBER 1903  
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And the strange thing is that there is something magic about it. We can't explain the mystery here, but we promise you that if you ever pick up "The Magic Story" you won't lay it down till you've read it through.

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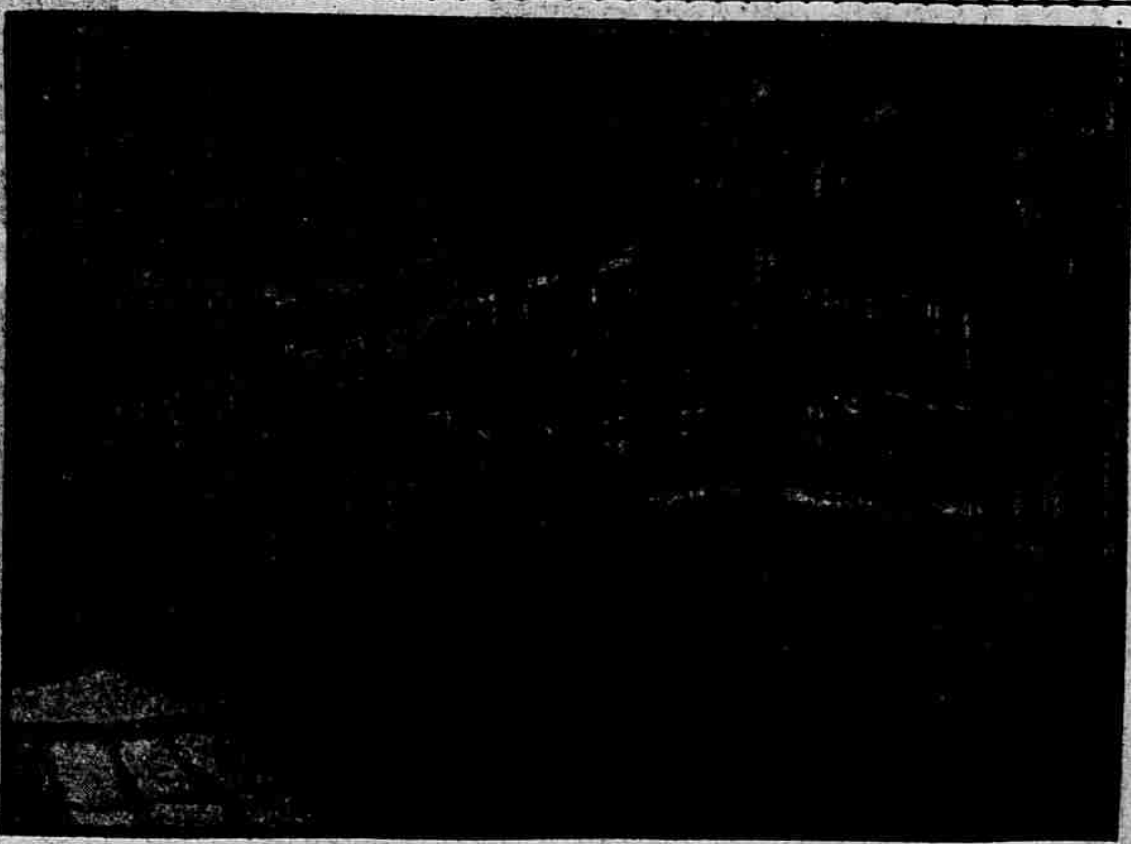
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## PASSING OF A LITERARY LANDMARK.



THE OLD CORNER BOOK STORE.—FROM THE CRITIC FOR NOVEMBER.

WRITTEN FOR THE SUNDAY REPUBLIC.  
The distinctly "literary haunts" are few in the United States. This land has few of the traditions of literature that mark Paris and London. But there are some few such places, and it will be a matter of regret, one has recently been torn down. It was at Washington School street in

Boston, and was an old book store, the meeting place of New England poets and their comrades.

The old building dates as far back as 1713 and has been used as a book store since 1811. James T. Fields, editor and publisher of many English, as well as American authors, used to grace this

store. While serving an apprenticeship as book store clerk, Fields studied men as well as his books. He gathered an insight and a literary taste which made him the discoverer of "The Scarlet Letter" and one of the most discerning publishers of his day. Hawthorne, Longfellow and Whittier were among the habitués of the old store.

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